THE NOVELISTIC PSYCHOLOGY OF SELECTED CHARACTERS IN SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S WINESBURG, OHIO

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ABSTRACT

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Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio is a novel which is unique because of its structural differences from the conventional models. Not only is the work a collection of stories which are interrelated; it is also the story of the maturation of a young boy, George Willard, into the complex world of the adult. Moreover, Anderson's technique of connecting these stories includes using George Willard as a counterpoint to the grotesques whom he depicts. These grotesques, who are, for example, Wing Biddlebaum in "Hands," Dr. Reefy in "Paper Pills," Elizabeth Willard in "Mother" and Alice Hindman in "Adventure," come to George Willard in hopes of redeeming themselves through him.

Furthermore, the revelation of the sufferings of the grotesques provides the necessary stimulation for George to realize the significance of life and to become aware of the

essential isolation of man. Owing to his adventures in Winesburg, such as his first sexual encounter with Louise Trunnion in "Nobody Knows," his talk with Wash Williams in "Respectability," his first confrontation with the death of a loved one in "Death" and his confusing experience with Elmer Cowley in "Queer," George Willard approaches manhood with the intention of not becoming as those grotesques are. His leaving Winesburg after the death of his mother symbolizes his growth, because once he is away from the town there is no chance that his imaginative capacity will be stifled.

Despite the fact that it was labelled immoral and was banned from many libraries, the appearance of Winesburg, Ohio in 1919 signaled the beginning of a new form of fiction. Moreover, not all critics of the work believed it unworthy of praise, for H. L. Mencken called it "something new under the sun" and Maxwell Geismar maintained that it was a nostalgic document. Later novelists who found models in Winesburg, Ohio for some of their works are Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe and Jean Toomer.

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INTRODUCTION

As an American novelist, Sherwood Anderson has found a significant and permanent place among men and women of American letters. He won major recognition with the publication of his greatest work, Winesburg, Ohio, in 1919. Like Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie and Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn, Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio has become an American classic. The stories found within the work represent the finest combination that Anderson has achieved of imagination, intuition and observation welded together into a dramatic unity by painstaking craftsmanship. The work remains one of the important products of the American Renascence, and has probably influenced later American writing more than any other book.[1] In observing that one of the most characteristic qualities of American life is our isolation from one another, Sherwood Anderson reiterated that pervasive sense of alienation which has become a theme of

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[1]Cleveland B. Chase, Sherwood Anderson (New York: Robert McBride and Company, 1927), pp. 31-32.

much of twentieth-century American literature.[2] Anderson uses the theme of alienation to create his "grotesques" in the small town of Winesburg, Ohio. His portrayals of such grotesques as Wing Biddlebaum in "Hands," Dr. Reefy in "Paper Pills," Elmer Cowley in "Queer" and Alice Hindman in "Adventure" provide a convenient metaphor by which to view society. Moreover, Anderson's creation of George Willard provided a realistic look at society, for George Willard represents the "norm" of society. To some of the grotesques, such as Dr. Reefy in "Paper Pills" and Dr. Parcival in "The Philosopher," George Willard is the lost son returned, the Daedalus whose apparent innocence and capacity for feeling will redeem Winesburg.[3] More importantly, George Willard is the young priest who will renew the forgotten communal rites by which they, the grotesques, may be bound together again.

Rex Burbank makes this comment concerning the work:

> Though the tales are self-contained and complete in themselves, and though they may be read individually with enjoyment, they gain an added and very important dimension when read consecutively as episodes in a single variation; for Winesburg as a whole presents a unified portrayal of the growth to maturity and

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[2]Welford Dunaway Taylor, Sherwood Anderson (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1977), p. 1.

[3]Irving Howe, Sherwood Anderson (New York: Sloane Associates, Inc., 1971), p. 102.

> consciousness of young George Willard, who develops as the symbol of the 'whole' man against whom the grotesques stand as fragments.[4]

These convictions concerning the unity of Winesburg, Ohio are held by many other critics of Sherwood Anderson. Because those critics see Winesburg, Ohio as a complete work, they logically maintain that the stories lack some depth when they are published separately.

This thesis is designed to show how Sherwood Anderson used his creative abilities as a novelist to depict both the grotesques and the evocatively "normal" George Willard. The following chapters will attempt to exemplify Anderson's genius. First, Chapter One will provide a basic background for the study by answering the question of whether Winesburg, Ohio is a novel or not. Secondly, Chapter Two hopes to reveal Anderson's creativity through his characters and their stories. Also, the depiction of these characters will provide a glimpse of crucial experiences in Anderson's own life. Thirdly, Chapter Three will focus on the impact of Winesburg, Ohio on American society in 1919, the postwar year in which it appeared. In addition, the influence of Winesburg, Ohio on later novelists will be established. Finally, the

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[4]Sherwood Anderson (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964), p. 66.

Conclusion will attempt to summarize the major points of the thesis.

CHAPTER I

THE NOVELISTIC QUALITIES OF WINESBURG, OHIO

Before looking directly at the novelistic characteristics of Winesburg, Ohio, one must bear in mind certain significant events in the life of Sherwood Anderson which indirectly led to his creating it. Although Winesburg, Ohio was published in 1919, Sherwood Anderson actually completed the stories in 1916. During the years before the publication of Winesburg, Ohio, beginning with 1912 through 1916, Anderson was forced to make traumatic changes in his life. These changes included Anderson's leaving his advertising business in Elyria, Ohio and moving to Chicago to become a writer, his divorce from his first wife, Cornelia Lane, and his marriage to a second wife, the sculptor Tennessee Mitchell, both in 1916, and his becoming a part of the "Chicago group." In Chicago he found a circle of writers and critics who formed the "Chicago Renascence" and who gave him both counsel and encouragement. Among them were Waldo Frank, Floyd Dell, Ben

Hecht, Carl Sandburg and Van Wyck Brooks.[1] One of the benefits of associating with the Chicago group was that Anderson met Tennessee Mitchell. When the two were married in July of 1916, Anderson was essentially free to become the writer that he intensely wanted to be, because Tennessee devoted herself to many of his personal responsibilities, including the care of his children. This fascinating union, which lasted from 1916 until 1923, not only produced Winesburg, Ohio, but encompassed the most productive period of development in Anderson's writing career. Other works published during the period were Windy McPherson's Son (1916), Marching Men (1917), Mid-American Chants (1918), Poor White (1920), The Triumph of the Egg (1921) and Many Marriages and Horses and Men, both in 1923.[2]

Despite the fact that many of the stories found in Winesburg, Ohio when first written by Sherwood Anderson were originally published in magazines such as The Little Review, The New Republic and The Seven Arts as separate entities, one finds that they revealed more meaning and harmony when

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[1]Norman Foerster, ed., Introduction to American Poetry and Prose (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977), p. 24.

[2]Rex Burbank, Sherwood Anderson (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964), pp. 15-16.

produced as a complete work. Sherwood Anderson, in his Memoirs, had this to say about their being published separately:

> I had got some of my stories printed in some little magazines, but wanted them published in book form. I felt that taken together they made something like a novel, a complete story. There were individual tales, but all about lives in some way connected.[3]

The idea of writing a series of thematically related sketches about individuals in a small town initially came to Anderson from Edgar Lee Masters, whose Spoon River Anthology was immensely popular in 1915 and 1916.[4] Specifically speaking, the only element which Masters' work offered to Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio is possibly the general structural arrangement; in fact, the two works are massively different. Spoon River Anthology is social criticism and satire, while the essence of Winesburg, Ohio is understanding and sympathy.[5]

Moreover, the one person who seems to have truly influenced Sherwood Anderson and his writing was Gertrude Stein. Through Stein Anderson learned that in the process of composition words could have independent value. They could

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[3]Sherwood Anderson's Memoirs (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942), p. 289.

[4]Burbank, Sherwood Anderson, p. 61.

[5]Ibid.

be "fresh or stale, firm or gruelly, colored or drab."[6] Particularly, Anderson's interest in Stein's Three Lives led to his style in Winesburg, Ohio. Stein was the best kind of influence, for she did not bend Anderson to her style, but liberated him for his own.[7] Evidence of Anderson's cultivation of his own unique style is, of course, Winesburg, Ohio. The composition of Winesburg, Ohio is an achievement for Anderson, because in addition to being a collection of tales, Winesburg, Ohio is a bildungsroman, the story of a boy, George Willard, growing to manhood and becoming involved in the perplexing world of adults.[8] Although he does not appear in all of the stories, George Willard is equally as important to the narrative as the grotesques, because he is the symbolic counterpoint to them. Willard's growth is evident as he becomes an active participant in life, rather than remaining a passive observer, and as he becomes a fully conscious adult. He is a newspaper reporter, and he appears in the early stories as the object of actions initiated by other people, or as the recipient of their advice. In

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[6]Irving Howe, Sherwood Anderson (New York: Sloane Associates, Inc., 1951), p. 95.

[7]Ibid., p. 96.

[8]Burbank, Sherwood Anderson, p. 66.

"Hands" he is the target of Wing Biddlebaum's admonition not to be influenced by the people of Winesburg; in "Mother" he is the reason for an interminable conflict between his father, who wants him to be rich and successful, and his mother, whose unhappy life with the conventional Tom Willard makes her afraid that George's capacity for an imaginative life will be ruined, as her own was, by the conventionality of her husband. In "The Philosopher" Dr. Parcival, a recluse tortured by guilt, instructs him to write the book that he himself "may never get written" on the idea that "everyone in the world is Christ"; and, finally, in the last of the stories, "Nobody Knows," George has his first sexual experience with Louise Trunnion, and his nervous effort to assure himself that no one will know indicates his moral growth.[9]

The next phase of Willard's development creates in him both the need to become involved in the incidents which occur around him and the need to become sympathetic to the feelings of others involved in those situations. In "The Thinker" Willard rises as a respected luminary in Winesburg. The idea that he may some day become a writer provides him with a place in the town and in the society. However, he remains an adolescent when he plans to write a love story,

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[9]Ibid., p. 70.

as Seth Richmond comes to his room and he directs Seth to inform Helen White that he, George, intends to fall in love with her. This action reestablishes the idea of his immaturity. Moreover, his adolescent attitude toward love and literature changes to puzzled amazement in "The Strength of God" and in "The Teacher," as Kate Swift's "passionate desire to have him understand the importance of life, to learn to interprete it truly and honestly" in his writing, causes him to be confused in his mind with physical desires. Eventually, he realizes that he has failed to comprehend what Kate was trying to tell him.[10]

From "Loneliness" to the final story, "Departure," Willard's sensibility grows to full maturity, as he develops an understanding of the complicated motives and contradictory instinctive demands inherent in life and comes to feel compassion for its victims.[11] As he listens to Enoch's story of diffidence and misunderstanding in "Loneliness," he feels a deep sympathy for the old man, something he has not previously felt for anyone.[12] In "An Awakening" he realizes an overpowering desire to find the meaning of life and to put his own life in agreement with it. To the gentle Tom Foster in "Drink" Willard reveals his maturity by being able to

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[10]Ibid. [11]Ibid. [12]Ibid., p. 71.

differentiate between conflicting attitudes without rejecting the unpleasant ones. At the death of Elizabeth Willard, in "Death," his adolescent resentment at the inconvenience caused by his mother's death in keeping him from seeing Helen White gives way to a sobering realization of the finality of death and a poignant consciousness of the tragic beauty his mother represented.[13] In the final episode of the story, Willard referred to her as "The dear, the dear, oh the lovely dear!"[14]

George Willard's full awareness of life's paradoxes comes in "Sophistication," when he becomes conscious of the "limitations of life" and of "his own significance in the scheme of existence," while at the same time he genuinely comes to love life itself. At this point it seems as though Willard is planning to take advantage of the advice given him by such grotesques as Wing Biddlebaum and Dr. Parcival. His goal is to make something of himself in life. With this revelation, which is the climax of the book, George Willard "crosses the line into manhood," as "voices outside of himself whisper a message concerning the limitations of life"

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[13]Ibid.

[14]Sherwood Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio. With an introduction by Malcolm Cowley (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 57.

and as comprehension of man's isolation and loneliness is followed by his beginning to think of the people of Winesburg with respect.[15] Willard no longer views them as strangers or "queer" aberrations of nature, but realizes that they too have as much a right to live in Winesburg or the world as any of the so-called "normal" people.

George Willard reaches maturity when he is able to recognize that loneliness is essential to the human condition and that all humans suffer for important reasons. They suffer either because they desire to suffer or because they do not have any control over their particular situations. His understanding of life comes, paradoxically, only when he is able to disconnect his thoughts and feelings from the influence of Winesburg. As he stands alone and free with Helen White, he can understand that all men are alone with their feelings, and that only through sympathy and compassion for one another can those feelings have any meaning. Those feelings are the truly meaningful elements of life.[16]

Winesburg, Ohio is something of an innovation in American literature. As Anderson himself described the work, it exemplified his own form of writing the novel:

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[15]Burbank, Sherwood Anderson, p. 71.

[16]Ibid., p. 72.

> I have even sometimes thought that the novel form does not fit an American writer, that it is a form which had been brought in. What is wanted is a new looseness; and in Winesburg, Ohio I had made my own form.[17]

Anderson validates his argument for the looseness of the form by contemplating the axioms that life itself is a loose, flowing thing and that there are no plot-stories in life. Therefore, Winesburg, Ohio is not centered on a particular plot, but recounts the moments in the lives of people with whom Anderson had possibly lived, walked and talked.[18] The many stories are bound together by the common background of the small town of Winesburg and by a number of recurring characters. It is for this reason that very few of the stories read as well in isolation as in the complete work. Except for "Hands," "The Strength of God," "Paper Pills," and "The Untold Lie," they individually lack the dramatic power which the book as an artistic unit achieves.[19]

Because there was a clearly unifying conception behind all of the stories: (1) they are set in the same locale; (2) many of the characters appear in several of the stories; and (3) there is a consistency of mood that carried over from story to story; Anderson only had to make a few minor changes,

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[17]Anderson, Memoirs, p. 289. [18]Ibid.

[19]Howe, Sherwood Anderson, p. 107.

mostly insertions of place and character names as linkage, in order to have a unified work.[20] William Phillips, in his study of the manuscript of Winesburg, Ohio in his article "How Sherwood Anderson wrote Winesburg, Ohio," notes that in the first individual story, "Hands," Anderson had called his town "Winesburg, Ohio;" in "Paper Pills" the next tale written, only "Winesburg" appears in the manuscript as the name of the town.[21] Other points brought out by Phillips in his study which connect the stories are that in the second story Anderson introduced "the Heffner Block," an actual group of buildings in Clyde, Ohio, of his boyhood, and "John Spaniard," the distinguished nurseryman French of Clyde.[22] Moreover, in the first story Anderson had mentioned that George Willard was the son of the proprietor of the New Willard House; the third story to be written, "Tandy," may have taken place on the very steps of the New Willard House. Tandy lives on a road leading off Trunion Pike, a new geographical detail added to the growing conception of the town

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[20] Ibid., p. 106.

[21] The Achievement of Sherwood Anderson: Essays In Criticism, Ray Lewis White, ed., (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1966), p. 72.

[22] Ibid.

of Winesburg. In the fourth story written, "Drink," the opening paragraph referred to Trunion Pike and added in this story to the physical picture by mentioning Duane Street, the name of a Clyde street, and "Hern's Grocery," the disguised name of Hurd's grocery, also of Clyde, where he worked as a boy. In addition to these facts, much of the action of the story takes place in the office of the Winesburg Eagle, which had been mentioned earlier in "Hands."[23] Each bit of description given by Anderson in the stories filled in the scenery of Winesburg—its people, its stories and its streets.

Just as the streets of Winesburg seem to lead from one another and to diverge from the Main Street, so did the actions of each story lead from one another and have a central focal point or person—George Willard. In "Drink" it was merely mentioned that George Willard, like Tom Foster, had a "sentiment concerning Helen White" in his heart. From this casual reference, one can surmise that Anderson created his conception of George Willard's love affair with Helen White which furnished part of the interest in "The Thinker" and the entire interest in "Sophistication," both later stories. These in turn suggested George Willard's adventures

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[23]Ibid., pp. 72-73.

with two other girls of the town of Winesburg, Louise Trunnion in "Nobody Knows" and Belle Carpenter in "An Awakening." George's walk with Belle Carpenter in "An Awakening" provided a beginning for Wash Williams's lecture on women to George in "Respectability."[24] The outburst of George's schoolteacher, Kate Swift, in "The Teacher," possibly led Anderson to wonder what effect she would have on others in the town, and in "The Strength of God" he described her impact upon the Reverend Curtis Hartman. Furthermore, Kate Swift's naked form, kneeing in prayer beside her bed, suggested to him another unsated spinister, Alice Hindman, who runs naked into the street in "Adventure."[25] From reading the stories in the order of their composition, one can see just how Sherwood Anderson follows the paths of his own creative imagination, while the town of Winesburg unfolds as a complete physical setting, with people who become entangled in their relations to each other either in awareness of each other or, more significantly, in their frustrated unawareness of each other.

Particularly if approached along the lines that have been suggested in the paragraphs above, Winesburg, Ohio appears to be of one piece. The only stories which do not

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[24]Ibid., p. 73.

[25]Ibid., pp. 73-74.

actually fit into the pattern of common locality and recurring characters are the four-part narrative of Jesse Bentley, "Godliness," and possibly "The Untold Lie," a beautiful story measuring the distance between middle-age and youth.[26] Despite the individual mention of these stories, Winesburg, Ohio is an excellently formed piece of fiction, because each of its stories follows a parabola of movement which abstractly and indirectly graphs the book's meaning. It is from a state of feeling rather than a dramatic conflict that Anderson develops in each one of his grotesques a rising lyrical excitement, usually stimulated to extremity by the presence of George Willard.[27] At the moment before reaching a turning point, this excitement is frustrated by a fatal inability to communicate. This structural pattern is often modulated by irony, as in "Nobody Knows" and "A Man of Ideas," but in "Sophistication" the emotional ascent is allowed to move forward without interruption.[28]

Another element which is evidence of there being unity in Winesburg, Ohio is Anderson's development of the theme of alienation, and it reaches its most abstract version

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[26]Howe, Sherwood Anderson, p. 106.

[27]Ibid., p. 107.

[28]Ibid.

in "Queer." The stories which follow "Queer" appear to be essentially a thematic afterthought.[29] The one obvious point of disharmony in Winesburg, Ohio is that in the introductory "Book of the Grotesque" Anderson suggested that the grotesques are victims of their own fanaticism, while in the actual stories themselves grotesqueness is the result of an effective resistance to forces external to its victims. An example is Wing Biddlebaum in "Hands," who becomes a recluse because his wish to blend learning with affection is fatally misunderstood.

In addition to the theme which establishes the unity of the novel, there are a few simple but extremely important symbols which aid in connecting the stories to the book's meaning and which define their uniqueness. The most important symbol is that of the room, which is used in the context of the novel to suggest isolation and confinement. Kate Swift in "The Teacher" is alone in her bedroom, Dr. Reefy in "Paper Pills" is in his office, the Reverend Curtis Hartman in "The Strength of God" is in his church tower, and Enoch Robinson in "Loneliness" is in his fantasy-crowded New York room.[30] In particular, Enoch Robinson's story "is in fact

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[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid., p. 108.

the story of a room almost more than it is the story of a man."[31]

Furthermore, most of the stories are construed by symbols which are peculiar to their particular meanings. Examples of Anderson's technique for the use of these symbols are those such as "Respectability," in which Anderson begins his story of the misogynist Wash Williams by thrusting before the reader an image of "a huge, grotesque kind of monkey, a creature with ugly, sagging, hairless skin,"[32] which dominates subsequent action and, of course, the symbolic power of that moment in "The Strength of God" when the Reverend Curtis Hartman, in order to look into Kate Swift's bedroom, breaks his church window at exactly the spot where the figure of a boy stands "motionless and looking with rapt eyes into the face of Christ."[33]

Epifanio San Juan, Jr. said this about Sherwood Anderson's form of writing in Winesburg, Ohio:

> What predominates in Winesburg, Ohio is precisely the complex pictorial representation that stems from the writer's concentrated attention and exploitation of the sensuous potentialities of his material. For Anderson, form is essentially an organic element which follows the contours of an image, of a symbolic cluster

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[31]Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio, p. 168.

[32]Ibid., p. 121.

[33]Ibid., p. 150.

> of sensory impressions aimed toward delivering an objective immediate presentation of a character's inner struggles, the specific quality of inwardness that constitutes the 'roundness' of his personality.[34]

The effective repetition of figurative patterns functions also as one of Anderson's means to attaining unity in Winesburg, Ohio. The focus on Dr. Reefy's hands in "Paper Pills" serves as the integrating center of his agonizingly pathetic crisis in life. His hands, which resemble "unpainted wooden balls," are accustomed to putting down his thoughts on scraps of paper which become "little round hard balls" in his pockets. Moreover, the story of his courtship is compared to "twisted little apples," which then elicits the image of his gnarled knuckles and, therefore, of the hands which write down his thoughts. Like the seasons which change because of habit or custom or move in a cycle, life itself in Winesburg, Ohio moves in a circular motion.[35]

Of still greater importance to the unity of Winesburg, Ohio is the fact that throughout the stories one notices the constant recurrence of phrases and sentences and constant repetition intended to contribute to the organic unity of the

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[34]"Vision and Reality: A Reconsideration of Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio." American Literature, vol. 35 (March, 1963), pp. 141-142.

[35]Ibid., p. 143.

narrative. Some examples are "Things went smash," in "Loneliness," "You dear! You dear! You lovely dear!" in "Death," or Elmer Cowley's rememberable refrain: "I'll be starched....I'll be washed and ironed and starched!" in "Queer," which all indicate that the particular obsessions of the characters, who constantly repeat them when subjected to great emotional strain, are in their contexts epiphanic.[36] The first repetition affirms Enoch Robinson's resigned acceptance of defeat when he realizes that he will always be alone, the second vocalizes Mrs. Willard's grasping after some impossible fulfillment of her most cherished hopes, which comes at her death, and the third suggests the need in Elmer Cowley to escape the family routine, which he does by leaving Winesburg.

Although most of the Winesburg stories seem to have been written in a short period of time, with one leading to the other, some critics believe that some were written later, "Death" is actually two stories, the account of the brief affair between Dr. Reefy and Elizabeth Willard and the story of George Willard's reaction to the death of his mother. It is preceded in the volume by "The Untold Lie" and "Drink," stories which deal with characters outside the Willard family.

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[36]Ibid., p. 144.

However, "Death" directs the interest back to the Willards by discussing the struggle between Elizabeth and Tom Willard over the future of George Willard. Dr. Reefy appears here when he becomes Elizabeth's lover just before her death in order that the most sympathetically treated mature characters can be brought together for a brief moment of escape from isolation.[37] The explanation given for the last three stories, "Death," "Sophistication" and "Departure," is that after "Drink" Anderson realized that his "Book of the Grotesque" had become full and that in order to keep the novelistic quality of the work he would have to bring his chief characters to an end. This is what he did with the final stories. Just as, in Windy McPherson's Son and Marching Men, it was the deaths of the mothers of Sam McPherson and Beaut McGregor which motivated them to leave their villages permanently, so Elizabeth Willard's long-awaited death is the event which signals that George Willard will leave Winesburg and which prepares for the resumption of his career in "Departure."[38] "Sophistication" is the culmination of the George Willard—Helen White affair, which had been

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[37]Phillips, "How Anderson Wrote Winesburg, Ohio," p. 82.

[38]Ibid., pp. 82-83.

mentioned in earlier stories, but had not been given a proper treatment. In the story Anderson was able to show not only the final stage of George Willard's feelings for Helen White, but also the growing sophistication which had resulted from his listening to the stories of the grotesques of Winesburg. Therefore, in the last two stories George Willard's life in Winesburg is brought to an end with the death of his mother, and there is the establishment of a more mature relationship with Helen White. Willard is ready to make his "Departure."[39] It has been speculated that a publisher might have suggested the last three stories to round out the career of George Willard; however, it seems more likely that Anderson himself came up with the idea on his own. These stories add a dimension to the life of George Willard, because he now stands firmly in the path of manhood, ready to face the responsibilities which come with it.

Waldo Frank, in his essay "Winesburg, Ohio After Twenty Years," had these comments to make concerning the work:

> The 'Winesburg' design is quite uniform: a theme-statement of a character with his mood, followed by a recounting of actions that are merely variations on the theme. These variations make incarnate what had

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[39]Ibid., p. 84.

> already been revealed to the reader; they weave the theme into life by the always subordinate confrontation of other characters (usually one) and by an evocation of landscape and village. In some of the tales, there is a secondary theme-statement followed by other variations. In a few, straight narrative is attempted; and these are least successful.[40]

Frank further comments that the substance of "Winesburg" is impressive and is alive, because it has been superbly formed. Like Franz Schubert and the Old Testament story tellers, Sherwood Anderson, who comes at the end of a psychological process, is a man with an inherited culture and a deeply assimilated skill. He is a type of the achieved artist.[41]

Anderson's artistic ability can be seen in his picture of Winesburg, Ohio, which in turn adds a sense of unity to the work. Winesburg, Ohio conveys a vision of American life which is:

> a depressed landscape cluttered with dead stumps, twisted oddities, grotesque and pitiful wrecks; a landscape eerie with cracked echoes of village queers rambling in their lonely eccentricity.[42]

The book itself is set in twilight and darkness, and its

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[40]The Merrill Studies In Winesburg, Ohio, Ray Lewis White, ed. (Columbus, Ohio: Charles Merrill Publishing Company, 1971), p. 85.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Howe, Sherwood Anderson, p. 97.

backgrounds are shaded with those gloomy blacks and marshy grays which are more than proper for a world with withered men who are sheltered by night and frustratingly reaching out for light which has been withheld from them.[43] Like most fiction, Winesburg, Ohio is a variation on the theme of reality and appearance in which the deformities which are caused by day (public life) are intensified at night. Nearly all of the grotesques come to George Willard with their stories in the night, which proves that they themselves are searching for the light of rebirth in the young Willard.

Anderson's depiction of the grotesques in Winesburg, Ohio reveals a society which is culturally deprived. Because the grotesques have no fundamental cultural backgrounds on which to base their experiences, nor are they able to establish meaningful relationships with others, their society is a cultural failure. Moreover, the town itself, which is virtually unproductive, is filled with lifeless people.[44] The culture has reached the final stages of deterioration. Rubbish and broken glass clutter the alleys and streets of the village.[45] This deterioration is exemplified in the following descriptions of certain grotesques in their own

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[43]Burbank, Sherwood Anderson, p. 74.

[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid.

physical environments:

> Elizabeth Willard's room at New Willard House overlooks an alleyway in which sometimes 'a picture of village life' presents itself, as she observes a continuing struggle between the local baker and a cat, in which the baker hurls 'sticks, bits of glass, and even some tools of his trade about' while the cat crouches 'behind barrels filled with torn paper and broken bottles' and swarms of flies hover overhead. To Elizabeth this seems 'like a rehearsal of her own life, terrible in its vividness.' The houses and public buildings offer a perspective equally bleak and depressing. Dr. Reefy's office is located off a 'dark hallway filled with rubbish'; Belle Carpenter lives in a 'gloomy old house' in which the 'rusty tin eaves-trough slipped from the fastenings...and when the wind blew it beat against the roof of a small shed, making a dismal drumming noise that sometimes persisted through the night'; and Wing Biddlebaum's small frame house offers a view of a 'half-decayed veranda.'[46]

The portrayal of the physical settings not only mirrors the ruined society, but also the grotesques found in that society.

Because the structural form of Winesburg, Ohio from prologue to epilogue is psychological and episodic, rather than linear, and because the stories are developed from moments of consciousness or revelation, rather than permitted to follow a simple sequence of time, it is not a novel in the usual sense of the term. In the character of George Willard those moments follow a pattern of progression toward increasing consciousness, as he absorbs the experiences of the grotesques. From the experiences of the grotesques Willard

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[46]Ibid.

discovers the meaning of life, and he leaves Winesburg in hopes of becoming the writer that the town expects him to become.[47] Moreover, the total view, as displayed in Winesburg, Ohio by Sherwood Anderson through his unifying form or style, is one of a moribund culture whose symbols are human fragments. Winesburg's only hope is rebirth of humility in love, as one sees dramatized in the person of George Willard. It involves a recognition both of man's tragic isolation and of the compassion generated by that recognition. Only when the grotesques free themselves from egoism and face the fact of their own isolation in the universe—as Willard does—can cultural rebirth and inner fulfillment occur.[48]

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[47]Ibid., p. 64.

[48]Ibid., pp. 76-77

CHAPTER II

SELECTED CHARACTERS AND THEIR STORIES IN WINESBURG, OHIO

One of the major reasons that Winesburg, Ohio is generally regarded as Sherwood Anderson's greatest work is because of Anderson's technique of characterization. His depictions of the "grotesques' such as Dr. Reefy and Elmer Cowley, the "normal" George Willard and other inhabitants of the town of Winesburg provide examples from which one might view and judge real society. Each of the grotesques which Anderson portrays has a story to tell, and George Willard usually fits into that story in some way. Sometimes he merely listens to the story, while at others he becomes as much a part of the story as the story-teller. Although each grotesques and his or her story are essentially different, there is one primary similarity which affects all of them—they all have some kind of problem. This problem, more often than not, forces them to be isolated from the rest of their society. In order to understand each grotesque and his or her particular problem, it is necessary that one understands

what Sherwood Anderson himself meant when he used the term "grotesque" to refer to those individuals in his fictional Winesburg, who often were unable to communicate effectively, who often suppressed certain emotions, and who were essentially isolated from the so-called "normal" people of Winesburg. Sherwood Anderson offers an explanation for the term "grotesque" and for his characters in the introductory statement or prologue to Winesburg, Ohio, which is entitled "The Book of the Grotesque." More specifically, "The Book of the Grotesque" is Anderson's attempt to propose reasons for the alienation of the grotesques and to supply a means by which this alienation can be overcome.[1] This explanation is given almost entirely in the words of an old writer who is very much like Sherwood Anderson himself; in fact, one might speculate that Anderson is describing himself and certain situations surrounding his own writing of Winesburg, Ohio. Because Anderson, like the old writer, had been once well known in his youth, but later became a recluse and lived in a single room, the similarities extend beyond physical appearances.[2] Almost ironically, the old writer even has his

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[1]Welford Dunaway Taylor, Sherwood Anderson (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1977), p. 20.

[2]Ibid.

bed elevated, as Anderson had done, so that he would not feel so isolated from the world outside his room. Anderson's story of the old writer reflects on how he created his grotesques:

> One night the old man lay on the raised bed half asleep, half awake, and pondered his former friends. It suddenly occurred to him that they had been transformed into grotesques—estranged people whose minds and lives had become distorted. In his perception of the word, however, not all grotesques were horrible; 'some were amusing, some almost beautiful.'[3]

Despite the fact that "The Book of the Grotesque" was never actually published, Anderson maintains that from his reading it he is able to recognize qualities in people and in other elements of life which he has never been able to understand before.[4]

How such people as Dr. Reefy, Alice Hindman and Enoch Robinson became grotesques, according to the old writer (Sherwood Anderson), is quite simple. The idea is conveyed in the following way:

> That in the beginning when the world was young there were a great many thoughts but no such thing as a truth. Man made the truths himself and each truth was a composite of a great many vague thoughts. All about in the world were the truths and they were all beautiful. It was the truths that made people grotesques. The moment one of the people took one of the truths to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his

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[3]Ibid., p. 21.

[4]Ibid.

> life by it, he became a grotesque and the truth a falsehood.[5]

Therefore, grotesqueness is not only the shield of deformation, but is also the residue of misshapen feelings which the people carry around with them.

Because each of the twenty-one stories which follow "The Book of the Grotesque" contains a character in which grotesqueness is manifest, the book itself can be taken as a controlling piece for those stories. Some of the people depicted in the stories are revolting, others are amusing, while still others are beautiful. Nevertheless, Anderson's depiction of them is filled with a great deal of feeling and sympathy.[6]

Incidentally, the old carpenter, who also appears in the prologue along with the old writer, may bear a possible resemblance to a carpenter who visited Anderson's home when he was a young boy growing up in Clyde, Ohio. Sherwood Anderson, in his Tar, describes the old carpenter:

> There was an old carpenter whose back had been hurt by a fall from a building and who was sometimes drunk. He did not enter the house, but sat on the steps by

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[5]Sherwood Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio. With an introduction by Malcolm Cowley (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1976), pp. 23-24.

[6]Taylor, Sherwood Anderson, p. 21.

> the kitchen door and talked with the woman while she worked at her ironing board.[7]

The carpenter was one of many persons who were actually a part of Sherwood Anderson's life and whom Anderson later re-created in his stories. Others include Dr. Reefy in "Paper Pills," Elizabeth Willard (Anderson's mother) in "Mother," Joe Welling in "A Man of Ideas" and many others who will be discussed in detail later on in this chapter.

Because they are shown neither in depth nor in breadth, nor even in complexity or ambiguity, the two dozen characters which appear in Winesburg, Ohio are not characters in the usual novelistic sense. Except for George Willard, the "hero," no other characters are allowed to grow or decline, nor are they allowed any variations of action or opinion. It must be pointed out that Anderson was fundamentally interested in trying to present through emotional images the immediate surface of human experience. Therefore, he draws the abstract and distorted, because fully rounded characterization would not serve his purpose.[8]

It is not known whether the idea for Winesburg, Ohio

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[7] Tar: A Midwest Childhood (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926), p. 71.

[8] Irving Howe, Sherwood Anderson (New York: Sloane Associates, Inc., 1951), pp. 98-99.

came before or after Sherwood Anderson wrote "The Book of the Grotesque." Moreover, Anderson's own collection of imaginary characters provided him with more than enough models for Winesburg, Ohio. For instance, his Talbot Whittingham, who had lived in a town called Winesburg, Ohio, had been for years a part of his novel writing and could very well be one of his models. Furthermore, the name for the town of Winesburg may have been derived from Wittenberg, the academy which Anderson attended, or possibly from the real town of Winesburg.[9]

As is exemplified in Winesburg, Ohio, most of the characters in the town possess some kind of psychic deformity which is the result of some traumatic failure in their lives. This failure might involve their effort to extend their personalities or to offer their love to others. Some of the symptoms which develop because of the characters' recoil from normal human intercourse and because of their substitution of gratification in inanimate objects include misogyny, inarticulateness, frigidity, God—infatuation, homosexuality and drunkenness. More specifically, these grotesques are deprived

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[9]William Phillips, "How Sherwood Anderson Wrote Winesburg, Ohio," The Achievement of Sherwood Anderson: Essays In Criticism, Ray Lewis White, ed. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1966), pp. 69-70.

of one of the greatest benefits of human health: the capacity for a variety of experiences. This is the reason that one might contend that "nothing happens" in Winesburg.[10] For most of the characters except George Willard, it is too late for anything different to happen to them. They can only accept their particular situations.[11]

Thus, Winesburg, Ohio may be considered as a fable of American estrangement, with its theme being the loss of love. This analogy stems from the fact that the book's major characters are isolated from the necessary sources of emotional sustenance. They are alienated from the normal activities of life, from their personal creative abilities, and from the community or society which once bound them together in fraternity, but now is an institution outside of their lives. The loss of love is evident in the rupture of the family, for example in "Mother," and in the rupture of craft or creativity, as revealed in "Hands." Most of all, this loss is seen in their inability to love one another. Ironically, their need for love becomes a barrier to their recognition and acceptance of it.[12]

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[10]Howe, Sherwood Anderson, p. 99.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid., pp. 100-101.

The central strand of action in Winesburg, Ohio, as revealed in more than one half of the stories, is essentially the determination of the grotesques to develop a personal relationship with George Willard, the reporter. Usually at night, when there is no chance of public ridicule, they approach him, as if beggingly, to tell of their sufferings in the hope of finding health in his voice.[13] For many of the grotesques, George Willard represented different perspectives on life. Their visions of him are as follows:

> To others among the grotesques, such as Tom Foster and Elmer Cowley, he is a reporter—messenger, a small town Hermes, bringing news of a dispensation which will allow them to re-enter the world of men. To Louise Trunnion he will bring a love that is more than a filching of flesh; to Dr. Parcival the promise to 'write the book that I may never get written' in which he will tell all men that 'everyone in the world is Christ and they are all crucified'; to the Reverend Curtis Hartman the willingness to understand a vision of God as revealed in the flesh of a naked woman; to Wash Williams the peace that will ease his sense of violation; and to Enoch Robinson the 'youthful sadness, young man's sadness, the sadness of a growing boy in a village at the year's end (which can open) the lips of the old man.'[14]

Moreover, as they reach out to George Willard, not only do they individually seek release through a sudden expressive outburst, but they also seek to restore themselves one to another in collective harmony. Despite the fact that it is

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[13]Ibid., p. 102.

[14]Ibid., pp. 102-103.

each other they truly need or secretly want, their estrangement is so extreme that they cannot turn to one another. Therefore, they turn instead to George Willard, who will soon no longer be a part of their lives.[15]

The first character clothed by Sherwood Anderson in Winesburg, Ohio is Wing Biddlebaum in "Hands," who is a frightened little man who seems to be afraid of his hands.[16] Wing Biddlebaum is among those grotesques of Winesburg who can be considered victims of the warped ideas of the society. Because society has treated him so unjustly and does not attempt to understand his ways, Wing Biddlebaum is isolated from it, with the sole exception of George Willard. Sherwood Anderson began the story of Wing Biddlebaum by saying that "the story of Wing Biddlebaum is the story of hands." These hands represent both his need to love and to be loved and his hope that others will share in his dream of life. That dream was, in essence, that every man should not be afraid to dream, nor should he be afraid to be an individual. His admonishment to George Willard is evidence of his ideals. His words of reproach to George are:

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[15]Ibid., p. 103.

[16]Phillips, "How Anderson Wrote Winesburg, Ohio," p. 70.

> You are destroying yourself. You have the inclination to be alone and to dream and you are afraid of dreams. You want to be like others in town here. You hear them talk and try to imitate them.[17]

It is during this talk that George Willard realizes that Wing Biddlebaum's hands have something to do with his fear of people, for it is when Wing Biddlebaum touches George with his hands that he becomes frightened.

In the story Sherwood Anderson explains that as a young man Wing Biddlebaum was a headmaster of a boys' school in Pennsylvania. There he was known as Adolph Myers, and was much loved by the boys at his school. Because he took pleasure in talking with his students, Adolph Myers (Wing Biddlebaum) attempted to carry a dream into their minds. Often he would caress the shoulders of the boys or play in their tousled heads, and even his voice was like a caress which he hoped would aid him in conveying a message of truth to them. However, one youth whom he touched in this fashion was a half-witted boy who misconstrued everything that Adolph Myers was doing. Because the boy become romantically attached to the teacher, he had fantasies of love between himself and Myers and told others about them. His stories caused parents to worry about their children, and they

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[17]Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio, p. 30.

immediately assumed that Myers was a homosexual. They beat him, threatened to lynch him and ran him out of town. Eventually, Wing Biddlebaum, as he then changed his name, came to Winesburg, where for twenty years the only use of his hands has been to pick berries.[18] Therefore, when Wing Biddlebaum unconsciously touches the shoulder of George Willard, he becomes afraid again of what the consequences will mean for him. His immediate reaction to the incident is as follows:

> With a convulsive movement of his body, Wing Biddlebaum sprang to his feet and thrust his hands deep into his trousers pockets. Tears came to his eyes. 'I must be getting along home. I can talk no more with you,' he said nervously.[19]

Although this trembling, prematurely old man may be viewed as a grotesque, someone unable to talk naturally to others and avoided by his fellow-citizens in Winesburg, Wing Biddlebaum is portrayed by Sherwood Anderson as being a good and normal human being who touches people out of love and concern. More importantly, he is essentially a lonely person who desires to be close to others. Ironically, the real grotesques of the story "Hands" prove to be the obsessed parents in the Pennsylvania town, who draw the wrong conclusions, and the citizens of Winesburg, who make fun of him.

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[18]Ibid., pp. 31-32.

[19]Ibid., p. 30.

It is they who have made Wing Biddlebaum a victim of society, rather than a grotesque.[20]

Ralph Ciancio, in "Unity of Vision in Winesburg, Ohio," said this about Wing Biddlebaum:

> What Wing ultimately comes up against is not simply the violence of shortsighted men or the wall of his perversion, but rather the radical paradox of being mortal, the story's title image serving to bring home the point: by means of his hands Wing had managed to live his dream temporarily, but the hard palpable hands of an enraged father who 'beat him with his fists' had quickly dispelled the viability of that dream. Flesh, we see, is at once the channel to communion, and to the extent that the grotesques will circumvent this enigma to their death, the story of all of their lives can be reduced to hands.[21]

Ciancio further notes that if "Hands" is to be considered as a model for subsequent stories it can be summed up by saying that society's repression of Wing Biddlebaum demonstrates the outcome of the grotesques' crises with forces outside of their lives. These forces awakened in the grotesques the awareness of their flesh and caused their guilt and, thus, their isolation from society.[22]

Sherwood Anderson once offered an explanation for his writing the story of Wing Biddlebaum as being drawn from an

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[20]Taylor, Sherwood Anderson, pp. 29-30.

[21]PMLA 87 (October 1972): 998.

[22]Ibid.

incident when he jokingly called a friend "Mabel" in a bar and watched the knowing looks of the other men at the bar. However, the idea of writing about a man "in whom the force that creates life is diffused, not centralized" must have come to him as he attended one of Floyd Dell's parties and questioned the group about Freud's views on homosexuality.[23] In his Memoirs Sherwood Anderson recalls his first encounter with homosexuality:

> Some years before, when I was newly come to Chicago, when I was employed as a laborer in a North side warehouse, I had for the first time seen homosexuality that was unashamed. It had happened that in that place I worked a part of the time on an unloading platform at the warehouse door. The warehouse was on a street on the North Side and in a house further down the street several men lived together. They came by our platform sometimes in groups, they had painted cheeks and lips, the others, the workmen and truckmen on the platform with me, shouted at them.
> 'Oh, you Mabel!'
> 'Why, if there isn't sweet little Susan.'[24]

This experience caused Sherwood Anderson to wonder what made men like that, and perhaps influenced his decision to write stories of such men. Examples are found in "Hands," in "The Man Who Became A Woman," and in his Horses And Men. These

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[23]Phillips, "How Anderson Wrote Winesburg, Ohio," p. 70.

[24]Sherwood Anderson's Memoirs (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942), pp. 243-244.

works led many readers to believe erroneously that Anderson sympathized with those men and their struggles.[25]

Dr. Reefy, one of the two physicians who live in Winesburg, is another grotesque who evokes sympathy in the reader. His appearances in two of the stories, "Paper Pills" and "Death," are significant for the development of Winesburg, Ohio. The haunting tale of "Paper Pills" demonstrates the distinct differences between appearance and reality. For example, Dr. Reefy is physically described as an ugly man with an extraordinary nose and enormous knuckles which resemble gnarled apples. Despite his appearance, Dr. Reefy, as Anderson points out, has "seeds of something very fine within him." He has spent many years sitting alone in his office, staring out the window and writing down thoughts on scraps of paper. He puts these scraps of paper into his pockets, where they become hard little balls.[26] Even Dr. Reefy's marriage had elements of appearance versus reality. The idea is exemplified in the following passage:

> Once, years before Dr. Reefy appears in the story, he was married. Again, on appearance, this was an odd, but nonetheless beautiful union. The girl he married had come to him because she was pregnant. But the father of the child was a man she did not love and did

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[25]Ibid., p. 244.

[26]Taylor, Sherwood Anderson, pp. 25-26.

> not wish to marry. Dr. Reefy had grasped her circumstances. He greeted her with the words, 'I will take you driving into the country with me.' From that moment she knew that she never wanted to leave him. The two married and lived happily. He was able to discuss freely with her his ideas and dreams. She died after a year of marriage. Dr. Reefy was then left alone to think and write down fragments of ideas.[27]

One point to bear in mind concerning the character of Dr. Reefy is that he never tried to monopolize any concept or truth for self-gain. Moreover, Dr. Reefy felt happiest only when he was able openly and freely to communicate with his wife, not when he could impose his ideas upon others.[28]

Also, Sherwood Anderson's comments about Dr. Reefy are important to the reader's understanding of his attitudes toward the grotesques. In the story the narrator describes Dr. Reefy's marriage as "delicious, like the twisted apples that grow in the orchards of Winesburg." He further explains that invariably the choice apples have been picked and sold to the cities, while only the gnarled, twisted fruit is left. These prove to be the sweetest apples of all.[29]

As a major image in Winesburg, Ohio, Sherwood Anderson uses the twisted apples not only to refer to Dr. Reefy's knuckles, but also to refer to the Winesburg stories themselves. To Anderson the source of beauty lies in the nature

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[27]Ibid., p. 26. [28]Ibid. [29]Ibid.

of one's character. Therefore, despite his physical unattractiveness, Dr. Reefy, like many of the grotesques, had an inner beauty which was evident in his marriage. Moreover, in "Death" his offering of comfort to Elizabeth Willard, George's mother, underlines his ability to understand the problems of his wife and of Mrs. Willard.[30]

Particularly because of his profession, which allowed him to be in close contact with the sorrowful bones of humanity and to be knowledgeable concerning the cycle of life and death, and specifically of the life and death of Elizabeth Willard, Dr. Reefy is the only character who understands grotesqueness in the abstract and who gains ascendency over it.[31] This ascendency, as Dr. Reefy himself explains, began the day that Elizabeth Willard walked into his office for the first time:

> I had come to the time in my life when prayer became necessary and so I invented gods and prayed to them. I did not say my prayers in words nor did I kneel down but sat perfectly still in my chair. In the late afternoon when it was hot and quiet on Main Street or in the winter when the days were gloomy, the gods came into the office and I thought no one knew about them. Then I found that this woman

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[30]Ibid., p. 27.

[31]Ciancio, "The Sweetness of the Twisted Apples," p. 1003.

> Elizabeth knew, that she worshipped also the same gods.[32]

This occasion proved to be one in which there was a sudden recognition on the part of one grotesque of the existence of another grotesque. Moreover, it is at this particular moment that Dr. Reefy learns that other men, as well as himself, are doomed to suffer loneliness.[33]

Furthermore, the paper pills in essence represent man's grasp of the Absolute, uniting the proponents of the gods that Dr. Reefy and Elizabeth worshipped, for even if man cannot attain the perfect fruit in his life he can always have the "sweetness of the twisted apples." In them he finds a temporary solution to the human condition; he realizes that others suffer.[34]

The change in Dr. Reefy's character is of vital importance to the identity of George Willard and his spiritual role as a writer. Dr. Reefy is actually the embodiment of all George aspires to become, and is the immediate hope of all the grotesques who see George Willard as their dormant savior through whom the imaginative powers of their lives

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[32]Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio, p. 222.

[33]Ciancio, "The Sweetness of the Twisted Apples," p. 1003.

[34]Ibid.

will be restored. Although they will not be made beautiful, they hope that the worth of their twisted images will someday be recognized.[35]

Sherwood Anderson, in his Tar, mentions a doctor who visited his home when he was a boy in Clyde, Ohio and who is possibly the Dr. Reefy whom he later created in his story. Anderson's description of the doctor who frequented his home is:

> He was a tall thin man with strange looking hands. The hands were like old grapevines that cling to the trunks of trees.[36]

In fact, the Dr. Reefy whom Sherwood Anderson created in "Paper Pills" seems to be a replica of the one he knew as a young boy. Like the one in the story, the real Dr. Reefy when he was past forty married a young woman of twenty who lived only a year after their marriage. Also, the real Dr. Reefy had a friend named John Spaniard, whose characteristics Anderson used in his story. Moreover, the real Dr. Reefy, like the one in "Paper Pills," proved to be a comfort to Anderson's mother.[37]

In Winesburg Dr. Reefy is seen by the other citizens

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[35] Ibid., p. 1005.

[36] (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926), p. 162.

[37] Ibid.

as an eccentric outcast. Sherwood Anderson's purpose in creating Dr. Reefy is to instill in his reader the idea that the path to understanding all human beings is through an acknowledgment and appreciation of character. In his portrayal of Dr. Reefy he reiterates the fact that it is necessary that people be accepted in society on the basis of their feelings and motives, rather than for their ability to conform to the norms of that society.[38]

Elizabeth Willard, George's mother, who appears both in "Mother" and in "Death," is the classic example of the ruined dreamer. To become an actress and to enjoy theater-life were some of the dreams she had nurtured which never came true. In some ways she was responsible for her own failure in life. Evidence is her unwise marriage to Tom Willard because other girls in town were getting married. She has spent many years chastizing herself for that unwise decision. At the age of forty, Elizabeth Willard appears to be older than she actually is.[39]

In "Mother" Sherwood Anderson reveals the distinct differences between Elizabeth Willard and her husband, Tom. Each has a different perspective on life, and each has a

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[38]Taylor, Sherwood Anderson, p. 27.

[39]Ibid., p. 32.

different goal in mind for their son to obtain. Tom Willard wants George to become successful and rich, and particularly wants him to stop daydreaming. His words of advice to George are:

> I tell you what, George, you've got to wake up. Will Henderson has spoken to me three times concerning the matter. He says you go along for hours not hearing when you are spoken to and acting like a gawky girl. What ails you? Well, I guess you'll get over it. I told Will that. You're not a fool and you're not a woman. You're Tom Willard's son and you'll wake up.[40]

On the other hand, Elizabeth Willard feels that George has a right to a creative imagination, and she is determined to keep his life from being ruined by the conventionality of Tom Willard. She even contemplates murdering Tom:

> In the darkness of her room she clenched her fists and glared about. Going to a cloth bag that hung on a nail by the wall she took out a long pair of sewing scissors and held them in her hand like a dagger. 'I will stab him,' she said aloud. 'He has chosen to be the voice of evil and I will kill him. When I have killed him something will snap within myself and I will die also. It will be a release for all of us.'[41]

However, Elizabeth's worries are brought to an end when she learns that George plans to leave Winesburg and the life his

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[40]Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio, p. 44.

[41]Ibid., p. 45.

father has in store for him in the future. In the conversation with Elizabeth Willard at the end of the story he says:

> I suppose I can't make you understand, but oh, I wish I could. I can't even talk to father about it. I don't try. I just want to go away and look at people and think. I suppose it won't be for a year or two but I've been thinking about it.[42]

Although she is filled with joy by George's decision, Elizabeth Willard is unable to express this joy to her son. Her only response is the familiar, "I think you had better go out among the boys. You are too much indoors."[43] This reaction reveals the theme related in the story "Mother," which is that of the Winesburg mother-figure's, Elizabeth Willard's, inability to communicate her love to her son.[44]

In the story "Death" Elizabeth Willard maintains all of the components of the philosophy of life suggested by Dr. Parcival in "The Philosopher." His dictum is that everyone in the world is Christ, and that all are crucified. Elizabeth is harshly self-crucified, as well as victimized by others. Also, the time sequence of her death corresponds to the death of Christ. She dies on a Friday at three o'clock in the afternoon. Moreover, just as Christ's eyes had a

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[42]Ibid. [43]Ibid.

[44]Howe, Sherwood Anderson, p. 101.

message for the world, so did Elizabeth Willard's:

> In her eyes was an appeal so touching that all who saw it kept the memory of the dying woman in their minds for years.[45]

Elizabeth's death signaled George Willard's leaving Winesburg and the resumption of his career as a writer.

Another significant fact concerning the story "Death" is that it is the only one in which the grotesques seem to meet.[46] Elizabeth Willard and Dr. Reefy share a poignant moment and embrace, but their attempt to love is shattered when they hear a noise in the hallway. Nonetheless, the death of Elizabeth Willard proves to be an occasion for George and Dr. Reefy to meet, for in death she is reborn and eternalized in her son's imagination and reestablished at once in relation to her innocence and to Dr. Reefy, her ideal lover.[47] Both refer to her as "the dear, the dear, oh the lovely dear!"[48]

Sherwood Anderson's depiction of Elizabeth Willard in "Mother" and in "Death" sheds light on his own childhood and the relationship that he had with his own mother. In his

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[45]Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio, p. 230.

[46]Howe, Sherwood Anderson, p. 103.

[47]Ciancio, "The Sweetness of the Twisted Apples," p. 1005.

[48]Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio, p. 230.

Story-Teller's Story, Anderson explains how his mother expressed her love to his brothers and him:

> The mother puts the kerosene lamp on a table by the bed and beside it the dish of warm, comforting melted fat. One by one six hands thrust out to her. ...The rubbing of the warm fat into the cracked hands of her sons is a caress. The light that now shines in her eyes is a caress.[49]

Not only is there a similarity in the two mothers' inability to vocalize their love for their sons, but both women die when their sons are young, and both deaths mean that the sons have to grow up and to accept the responsibilities which manhood brings.

The elements of a sentimental melodrama are contained in "Adventure," the story of a non-aggressive grotesque, Alice Hindman. At the age of sixteen Alice Hindman fell in love with and became the lover of Ned Currie, a writer for the Winesburg Eagle. Currie later left Winesburg to find a better job in Cleveland, promising to return and marry Alice. However, at the time of the story Alice is twenty-seven and Ned has never returned. Rather than being a sentimental treatment of a country maiden whose lover is seduced by the evils of the city, Anderson's treatment of Alice's story bears more resemblance to a penetrating psychological study

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[49](New York: B. W. Heubsch, Inc., 1924), pp. 10-11.

of Alice.[50] If one were to recall the definition of the term "grotesqueness," he would recognize that a concept of love is the "truth" or idea that Alice has seized. This "truth" is derived from the fantasies that she has woven around the brief affair with Ned Currie.[51]

Anderson's purpose in telling the story of Alice Hindman is not meant to bring ridicule on persons such as Alice but, quite obviously, to demonstrate that when fantasies obscure one's ability to perceive reality, as is the case with Alice, the results can be disastrous. For Alice the memory of physical love is the seed of the dream that Ned will someday return. However, after waiting a period of eleven years Alice's loneliness increases, and ultimately she is in a state of desperation.[52] Not only is her desperation shown in her reaction to other men in the town, but also in her tormented state of mind:

> As time passed and she became more and more lonely she began to practice the devices common to lonely people. When at night she went upstairs into her own room she knelt on the floor to pray and in her prayers whispered things she wanted to say to her lover. She became attached to inanimate objects, and because it was her own, could not bear to have anyone touch the furniture of her room. The trick of saving

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[50] Taylor, Sherwood Anderson, p. 24.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid., p. 25.

> money, begun for a purpose, was carried on after the scheme of going to the city to find Ned Currie had been given up. It became a fixed habit and when she needed new clothes she did not get them. Sometimes on rainy afternoons in the store she got out her bank book and, letting it lie open before her, spent hours dreaming impossible dreams of saving enough so that the interest would support both herself and her future husband.[53]

Moreover, one rainy night this desperation became more than she could bear and Alice ran naked into the streets of Winesburg attempting to find the love that she so desperately desired.[54] Because her dreams of marriage to Ned Currie had made her uneasy with other men, this reckless attempt by Alice to experience the imaginary romantic adventure which had obsessed her is probably the only adventure that she will ever know. Nonetheless, Alice does learn one important lesson from her actions and experience, which is "to face the fact that many people must live and die alone, even in Winesburg."[55] Her realization of this fact enables her at last to let go of her fantasy concerning Ned Currie.

The story "Loneliness," which is concerned with Enoch Robinson's inability to cope with the world, is probably the most richly symbolic of the entire work, and is the one which

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[53]Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio, p. 115.

[54]Taylor, Sherwood Anderson, p. 25.

[55]Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio, p. 120.

more fully expresses that idea of loneliness which unites all of the stories into a complex view of life.[56] The story reveals that in order to gain the benefits of an imagination and insight into the meaning of life a man must pay the price of isolation or alienation from his fellow men.[57] Such is the case with Enoch Robinson. He can be described as a simple man who was sensitive and a dreamer. Because he was quite different from other men, Enoch was forced to create in his imagination his own world and his own people. These people he created were queer ones:

> There was a woman with a sword in her hand, an old man with a long white beard who went about followed by a dog, a young girl whose stockings were always coming down and hanging over her shoe tops.[58]

All these people inhabited the imaginary world of Enoch's room, and they were his answer to the loneliness he felt. When a woman attempted to enter his world, he drove her out of the room. However, when she left all of the people that he had created left and Enoch was forced to face reality—he would always be alone.[59]

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[56]S. K. Winther, "The Aura of Loneliness In Sherwood Anderson," Modern Fiction Studies (Spring 1959): 148.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio, p. 173.

[59]Winther, "The Aura of Loneliness," p. 173.

George Willard's fate is foreshadowed in Enoch Robinson's story. Because Enoch is in essence George, the story "Loneliness" thematically concludes the novel.[60] Like George, Enoch is a native of Winesburg, and he left Winesburg to go to New York when he was twenty-one. In New York he became the artist that George strives to become. Also like George, Enoch is a dreamer, and when he gets into a discussion with his friends in New York his irrational stammering resembles George's muttering sounds as he wanders through Winesburg. Moreover, the town of Winesburg proves to be the place which establishes George's manhood, as well as the place which causes Enoch to remember the people of his own childhood.[61]

Because he thinks of his family as misfits in Winesburg, Elmer Cowley, in "Queer," has for years suffered silently. His father Ebenezer Cowley, who sold his farm and bought a general store, is a failure as a merchant because of his inability to communicate and because of his lack of knowledge concerning merchandise. It is for this reason that no one buys anything from the store. Ebenezer's use of his

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[60]Samuel Pickering, "Winesburg, Ohio: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man," The Southern Quarterly 16 (October 1976): 37.

[61]Ibid.

favorite expression, "I'll be washed and ironed and starched," supplies a bit of irony, because he himself is physically shabby and unkempt; his unattractive store and his awkwardness with customers are just some of the reasons that Elmer believes that many people in Winesburg see the whole family as "queer." Elmer hopes to change this family image by proving that he is not queer.[62]

Consequently, George Willard fits prominently into the story as a foil to Elmer Cowley. Because he is successful as a newspaper writer, can express himself well, and is looked upon with respect by the people of Winesburg, Elmer strongly resents George.[63] Moreover, George Willard represented the "norm."[64] He is all that Elmer felt that he himself was not:

> He thought the boy who passed and repassed Cowley and Son's store and who stopped to talk to people in the street must be thinking of him and perhaps laughing at him. George Willard, he felt, belonged to the town, typified the town, represented in his person the spirit of the town. Elmer Cowley could not have believed that George Willard had also his days of unhappiness, that

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[62]Taylor, Sherwood Anderson, p. 29.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Donald Gochberg, "Stagnation and Growth: The Emergence of George Willard," The Merrill Studies in Winesburg, Ohio, Ray Lewis White, ed. (Columbus, Ohio: Charles Merrill Publishing Company, 1971), p. 44.

> vague hungers and secret unnameable desires visited also his mind.[65]

Furthermore, Elmer's feeling of isolation stems from the fact that he has been living in Winesburg for a year and has not made any friends. Therefore, he assumes that he was destined to go through life without friends.[66] Actually wishing to confide in George Willard, Elmer loses his nerve and, instead, talks to a half-wit, Mook. Mook, whose name suggests his childish helplessness in comprehending the world around him, proves able only to add to the total frustration of Elmer Cowley. In his frustration Elmer explains to Mook why he has chosen him to be his confidant:

> I had to tell someone and you were the only one I could tell. I hunted out another queer one, you see. I ran away, that's what I did. I couldn't stand up to someone like that George Willard. I had to come to you. I ought to tell him and I will.[67]

When he finally conjures up enough courage to summons George from the Winesburg Eagle office, he is unable to communicate his feelings. He tells George:

> Oh you go on back. Don't stay out here with me, I ain't got anything to tell you. I don't want to see you at all.[68]

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[65]Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio, p. 194.

[66]Ibid., p. 195. [67]Ibid., p. 197. [68]Ibid., p. 198.

Frustrated by his inability to declare to George his determination not to be labelled queer, Elmer Cowley decides to leave Winesburg. However, before he leaves he decides to make one last effort to communicate with George Willard. Again, when George meets him at the midnight train he cannot speak.[69] All he does manage to say is "I'll be washed...," his father's expression which he has grown to hate so much. Unable to say any more to George Willard, he articulates his misery and agitation in the only way he knows. He strikes out with his fists, pounding George Willard until he falls to the platform of the train station. As the train pulls out of Winesburg he is, most pathetically, pleased with himself because he has shown at least one person, George Willard, that he is not queer.[70] Because George Willard is unable to understand him or provide the love which he needed to overcome his queerness, Elmer is forced to reject him and Winesburg, the town he represented.[71]

George Willard, who appears in nearly all of the stories, but with special emphasis in "Sophistication" and "Departure," is as much a part of the town of Winesburg as

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[69]Howe, Sherwood Anderson, p. 105.

[70]Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio, p. 201.

[71]Gochberg, "Stagnation and Growth," p. 44.

the grotesques, but he is separated from them for many important reasons.[72] The son of Tom Willard, a hotel-keeper, and Elizabeth Willard, his prematurely aging mother, George's job as reporter for the Winesburg Eagle enables him to come in contact with all kinds of people in Winesburg.[73] Among those are the grotesques, who seek him out to tell their stories of suffering. The grotesques hope to find many qualities in George which they themselves no longer possess:

> In his boyish innocence, they hope to find peace; in his health, they seek wholeness; in his love--communion and understanding.[74]

Moreover, because George can express himself easily, possesses youthful health, and has a job which demands that one be able to communicate effectively, he is saved from many of the frustrations of emotional isolation which the grotesques encounter each day.[75] In the attempt to unburden themselves, the grotesques and their victims come to George as if he were able to provide them with a release from their sufferings. Most of the time he is drawn into their problems and actions, yet he is never truly affected by these involvements.

In some of the stories George is depicted as an

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[72]Ibid., p. 42. [73]Ibid. [74]Ibid., p. 43.

[75]Ibid.

active young man exploring the intellectual and sexual realms of young manhood. For example, in "Nobody Knows" he has his first sexual encounter with Louise Trunnion, an affair of which he hopes no one will ever learn. These experiences are a part of his growth, but they do not represent the important elements found in his purpose in life. What makes George an unusual figure in American literature is the fusion and balancing within him of the distortions of grotesque incompleteness to form a harmonious, whole, creative being.[76]

Irving Howe has perceptively commented:

> The burden which the grotesques would impose on George Willard is beyond his strength. He is not yet himself a grotesque mainly because he has not yet experienced deeply, but for the role to which they would assign him he is too absorbed in his own ambition and restlessness. The grotesques see in his differnce from them the possibility of saving themselves, but actually it is the barrier to an ultimate companionship.[77]

Moreover, Sherwood Anderson had a purpose in placing George Willard in many of the stories, for through the suffering of the grotesques he acquires wholeness. Unlike Dante, who had to go through the fires of Hell to reach Heaven, and Faust, who had to be tempted by the devil before he could achieve the harmony he sought, in the case of George, his suffering

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[76]Ibid., p. 46. [77]Sherwood Anderson, p. 103.

prior to wisdom was done for him by the grotesques.[78] Among those who are Christ-characters, and thus unknowingly crucified in order that George may be saved, are Wing Biddlebaum, Elmer Cowley and his mother, Elizabeth Willard. His salvation is revealed at the end of the novel, when he is able to feel love and to break away from the grotesques and Winesburg in search of his wholeness.[79]

Anthony Hifler has said this of Willard and his experience with Helen White in "Sophistication":

> Having attained a perspective outside himself unlike any of the grotesques George is able to do that rare and momentary thing: break through to the world and to another human being. In contrast to the stories of Louise Bentley and Elizabeth Willard ('Mother'), the diffuse impulse to communion is not confused and destroyed by narrow limitation to direct sex. Both George and Helen feel 'chastened and purified' by their shared and unspoken mood.[80]

In addition, Hifler notes that the story is a perfect transposition of the classic tragic mode because it offers a means of "transcendence" and "catharis" in the individual's (George's) realization of his participation in the universal fate. Therefore, in the final story, "Departure," having

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[78]Gochberg, "Stagnation and Growth," p. 46.

[79]Ibid.

[80]The Revolt from the Village 1915-1930 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1969), p. 155.

seen the beauty of fall and death, George is at liberty to attain his brief period of spring and life. However, the unbroken lives of the grotesques remain his most mature and richest memory.[81]

That George is able to thrust the experiences which he has gained in Winesburg to the background of his mind does not mean that he is insensitive to those experiences and the people who were involved in them, but, rather, that these often painful experiences will not destroy his capacity to dream.[82] Moreover, his leaving Winesburg is a sign that George Willard has finally escaped the "truths" which force the grotesques to remain grotesques. Physical separation from Winesburg for him will mean that he will be able to attain artistic perspective on his past experiences.[83]

Just as the old writer in the prologue is Sherwood Anderson, one might also surmise that George Willard is the youthful Anderson. Because George meets some of the same people whom Anderson met in his lifetime, persons such as Dr. Reefy, Elizabeth Willard and Joe Welling, and has some of the same experiences which Anderson had, such as those with

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[81]Ibid., pp. 155-156.

[82]Taylor, Sherwood Anderson, p. 31.

[83]Pickering, "Portrait of Artist," p. 31.

Louise Trunnion and the death of his mother, there is some powerful evidence that Winesburg, Ohio is autobiographical. However, it must be said that the mature Anderson was probably more interested in depicting different people and their personalities than in telling his own life-story. Nonetheless, George Willard bears a quite noticeable resemblance to Anderson.

The characterization of such persons as Dr. Reefy, Wing Biddlebaum and Elmer Cowley makes Winesburg, Ohio Sherwood Anderson's greatest achievement. Through their dreams, frustrations and relationships to society within Anderson's fictional Winesburg, Ohio, the novelist symbolizes his view of American life in the first quarter of the twentieth century.[84] Anderson's purpose in portraying the characters was not to condemn American political systems and social institutions, but to reveal his perception that most Americans repressed certain feelings without knowing it.[85] Moreover, he offered George Willard as a counterpoint to those people. Cleveland B. Chase points out that:

> Anderson has peopled his mythical Winesburg with strikingly abnormal types; often he goes still further

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[84]Taylor, Sherwood Anderson, p. 19.

[85]Ibid.

> and selects as the basis for his story abnormal events in their lives. It is true that such events as he pictures do occur; but they are exceptions to the rule.[86]

Thus, Anderson in his portrayal of the inhabitants of Winesburg does not present that village as being any better, or any worse, than any other small town in America. Moreover, the universality of the work does not depend upon the frequency of the existence of these types in the world, but upon the similarity of those emotions and reactions which it exposes to those which belong to all people.[87] Winesburg, Ohio might, therefore, be seen as any small town in the United States.

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[86] Sherwood Anderson (New York: Robert McBride and Company, 1927), p. 37.

[87] Ibid., p. 38.

CHAPTER III

THE EFFECT AND INFLUENCE OF WINESBURG, OHIO ON THE SOCIETY OF 1919 AND ON LATER NOVELISTS

With its appearance in 1919, Winesburg, Ohio announced the coming of age of a new American literature for the early post-war generation. Like Sinclair Lewis' Main Street, which disreputed the crude commercialism of the age, and like F. Scott Fitzgerald's This Side of Paradise, which enfranchised the young philosophers, Sherwood Anderson's novel, Winesburg, Ohio, first exposed the apprehensive and misshapen recesses of our provincial soul.[1] Because of the importance placed on the work, Anderson became one of the founders of the New Realism which developed out of the need to depict the fundamental aspects of life, which included the unpleasant aspects of American life.[2] Despite its importance,

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[1]Maxwell Geismar, "Anderson's Winesburg," The Merrill Studies in Winesburg, Ohio, Ray Lewis White, ed. (Columbus, Ohio: Charles Merrill Publishing Company, 1971), pp. 89-90.

[2]Ibid., p. 90.

Ray Lewis White, in his introduction to The Achievement of Sherwood Anderson, notes that the reception of Winesburg, Ohio by critics and readers was not very responsive. He comments:

> The beauty of Anderson's sketches of the helplessly lonely people in a fictional Ohio town was not immediately noted; instead critics praised the tales as a new form of fiction: 'As a challenge to the snappy short story form, with its planned proportions of flippant philosophy, epigrammatic conversation, and sex danger, nothing better has come out of America than Winesburg, Ohio.'[3]

White further notes that even the critics who understood Anderson's method and purpose in writing Winesburg, Ohio could not fully appreciate his achievement. He maintains that their incompetencies lay in the fact that they did not totally comprehend the beauty found in the stories:

> Some of his sketches which are all impressionistic have an underlying significance and real beauty of feeling.[4]

When the critics were unable to identify with the beauty represented in the stories, they often missed the point that Anderson was trying to emphasize.

Moreover, there are many revolutionary elements in Winesburg, Ohio which indirectly may have caused it to be

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[3](Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1966), p. 10.

[4]Ibid.

unjustly criticized. For instance, Anderson's use of characters who are preachers, telegraph-operators, shabby hotel-keepers, misunderstood merchants and neurotic strawberry-pickers, all of whom were viewed as "commonplace people," caused much dismay about and scorn for the work. It was believed that these characters could not challenge the existence of Shakespeare's conquerors and the wealthy classes of Henry James.[5]

Furthermore, in an article written anonymously in 1919 in the New York Sun, the writer called Winesburg, Ohio a polluted would-be Spoon River.[6] In other words, the writer saw it as a poor imitation of Masters' Spoon River Anthology. Other abusive remarks concerning the work were recorded in memory by Sherwood Anderson himself, who reflected on them in his Memoirs. Anderson writes:

> That the book did not sell did not bother me. The abuse did. There was the public abuse, condemnation, ugly words and there was also, at once, a curious kind of private abuse.[7]

The private abuse came mostly in the form of letters that he

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[5]Geismar, "Anderson's Winesburg," p. 90.

[6]"A Gutter Would Be Spoon River," The Merrill Studies in Winesburg, Ohio, Ray Lewis White, ed. (Columbus, Ohio: Charles Merrill Publishing Company, 1971), p. 26.

[7]Sherwood Anderson's Memoirs (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942), p. 289.

received from many unsympathetic readers. He notes:

> Item...A letter from a woman, the wife of an acquaintance. Her husband was a banker. I had once sat at her table and she wrote to me that having sat next to me at the table and having read my book, she felt that she could never, while she lived, be clean again.[8]

Also, a friend wrote him of an incident in which a group of New Englanders burned three copies of the book because they believed it to be too immoral to be placed in their town's library.[9]

Even the people of the real Winesburg, Ohio found fault with Anderson's depiction of what he believed to be a fictional town. Anderson maintains:

> When I gave the book its title I had no idea there really was an Ohio town by that name. I even consulted a list of towns but it must have been a list giving only towns listed on the railroad.[10]

Nonetheless, the people of the actual town of Winesburg protested. They denounced the book as being immoral and not representative of the actual inhabitants of Winesburg, Ohio. Anderson's defense against such accusations was that if the people of the real town were as decent as the ones he imagined in his fictional town they were, in fact, truly moral people.[11]

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[8]Ibid., p. 294. [9]Ibid. [10]Ibid., p. 295.

[11]Ibid., pp. 295-296.

The history of Winesburg, Ohio is evidence of how criticism can reduce a writer to harmless irrelevance. The revolt against the village, the rejection of middle-class morality, the proclamation of sexual freedom and the rise of cultural primitivism are just a few of the categories in which the work has been placed. However, Irving Howe claims that these labels are incorrect. He contends that it is obvious that Anderson's revolt was aimed against something far more fundamental than the restrictions of the American village and was equally relevant to the American metropolis. Furthermore, he says that Winesburg is primarily concerned with neither morality nor middle-class mores, and thus offers no proposal for sexual conduct, nor is it primitive in style.[12] Seeking always to depict the true morality which governs men and women, especially when they are at odds with or are merely conforming to conventional morality, was the purpose of Sherwood Anderson in his writing of Winesburg, Ohio.[13]

Although there were some critics who reputed the work as immoral and unworthy of praise, others saw in it a new form of expressing the attributes of American life. W. S. B.,

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[12]Sherwood Anderson (New York: Sloane Associates, 1951), p. 97.

[13]White, The Achievement of Anderson, p. 10.

in "Ohio Small Town Life: Commonplace People and Their Everyday Existence," who also compared the work to Masters' Spoon River Anthology, had some positive points to focus on in his discussion of Winesburg, Ohio. He commented:

> Winesburg, Ohio is another Spoon River. Mr. Anderson gets down underneath the fate and its motives in the lives of his characters with the same merciless precision as does Mr. Masters. There are twenty-four tales, each a unit in itself, and yet each is a chapter in a longer narrative which records the life of a community in the Middle West a generation ago. There is a grotesque of truth in every one of the persons in the tales that is symbolized by some very commonplace motive or experience, the "Hands" of Wing Biddlebaum, which had aroused the anger of a town from which he was driven in the night, innocent hands that were his sole expression of tenderness; so the 'Paper Pills' of Dr. Reefy, the 'Mother' in Elizabeth Willard, 'The Philosopher' in Dr. Parcival, the 'Godliness' in Jesse Bentley, and on through the twenty-four characters bringing truth within them to the surface of experience that is sometimes tragedy, comedy, pathos, humor, and mental reality.[14]

W. S. B. also said that although all these lives, traits and experiences cross and recross the background of the Ohio town, a town of commonplace features with commonplace people pursuing their commonplace affairs, Anderson's technique for writing the stories is not commonplace. He maintains that Anderson's manipulation of what he discovers in his men and women, with so much sympathy and with such an accurate

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[14]The Merrill Studies in Winesburg, Ohio, Ray Lewis White, ed. (Columbus, Ohio: Charles Merrill Publishing Company, 1971), p. 31.

understanding of the virtues of their experiences, made the work unique in contemporary American fiction.[15] Moreover, the book as a whole is a confident example of what can be achieved when an artist who possesses such qualities as sensibility, imaginative vision and the capacity to test reality with that imagination deals with the infinities that lie beneath the commonplace elements of American life.[16]

Other critics marvelled at Sherwood Anderson's ability to prolong his childhood in Winesburg, Ohio. In the stories Anderson revealed that he was able to hold in a realm of his mind the feeling of what his youth must have been. His remembrance of the town goes beyond the peculiarities of the townsfolk and their stories, but is embedded in his ability to stay in the center of each small-town tragedy or comedy.[17]

Henry L. Mencken, in his article "Something New Under The Sun," called Winesburg, Ohio something new in the art of fiction. He exulted:

Nothing quite like it has been done in America. It is

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[15] Ibid., p. 32.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Llewellyn Jones, "The Unroofing of Winesburg: Tales of Life That Seems Overheard Rather Than Written," The Merrill Studies in Winesburg, Ohio, Ray Lewis White, ed. (Columbus, Ohio: Charles Merrill Publishing Company, 1971), p.39.

> a book that, at one stroke, turns depression into enthusiasm.[18]

Moreover, he noted that:

> In form, it is a collection of short stories, with common characters welding themselves into a continued picture of life in a small town. But what short stories! Compare them to the popular trade goods of the Gouverneur Morrises and Julian Streets, or even to the more pretentious work of the Alice Browns and Katharine Fullerton Geroulds. It is the difference between music by a Chaminade and music by a Brahms. Into his brief pages Anderson not only gets brilliant images of men and women who walk in all the colors of reality; he also gets a profound sense of the obscure, inner drama of their lives.[19]

This goal, which Anderson so easily achieved, was what Masters attempted and missed:

> Mr. Masters says, in effect, 'Here are human beings for you! What imbecile, groveling, hopeless vermin they are!' Mr. Anderson says in effect, 'Here are human beings of whom I am one. Even our grossest weaknesses have about them something of tragic beauty. Are we not worthy of your sympathy no less than of your disgust? Isn't it possible that you, too, are one of us—a human being for whom unhappiness means frustrated desire, to whom there is a perturbing mystery, in whom there is a spiritual impulse to be 'good' which is plagued and balked by a natural urgency at times to be otherwise?'[20]

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[18] The Merrill Studies in Winesburg, Ohio, Ray Lewis White, ed. (Columbus, Ohio: Charles Merrill Publishing Company, 1971), p. 40

[19] Ibid.

[20] Burton Rascoe, "Winesburg, Ohio," The Merrill Studies in Winesburg, Ohio, Ray Lewis White, ed. (Columbus, Ohio: Charles Merrill Publishing Company, 1971), pp. 27-28.

Furthermore, Masters seemed reproachful and removed from the situations concerning his characters, while in Anderson there is fraternal pity and a homely, tender feeling of participation in human destiny.[21]

Another significant point to bear in mind concerning Winesburg, Ohio is that almost every middle-westerner could identify with the town which Anderson depicts. Many of the middle-westerners agreed that the evils and distortions of society were not confined to the city, but were as much a part of their own towns as they were of the city.[22]

Because Anderson felt the need to express himself sincerely and truthfully about controversial subjects such as sex and the unfulfillment and desperation that existed below the surface of American life, it might be said that he had no conscious intention of producing a work as shocking as Winesburg, Ohio seemed to be to the society of 1919, which banned it from a number of its libraries. Moreover, to many men of letters Anderson was the pioneer who dared to say what others had feared to say in an honest, forthright manner.[23]

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[21]Ibid., p. 28.

[22]M. A. "A Country Town," The Merrill Studies in Winesburg, Ohio, Ray Lewis White, ed. (Columbus, Ohio: Charles Merrill Publishing Company, 1971), p. 23.

[23]Welford Dunaway Taylor, Sherwood Anderson (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1977), p. 36.

Consequently, Winesburg, Ohio initiated the twenties and foreshadowed the crusade against Victorian and puritanical taboos. It actually set the stage for the entrance of Eugene O'Neill and his characters, tormented beings such as Eprahim Cabot and Abbie Putnam in Desire Under the Elms. Although the work reveals some preoccupation with sexual malajustment, very early within it one recognizes that Anderson's genuine concern is with human isolation and that love is the weapon he uses to penetrate this isolation.[24] Maxwell Geismar said that Winesburg, Ohio is not so much a radical as a nostalgic document.[25] Therefore, it was meant not so much as a deterrent for the society that it depicted, but was meant more or less as a work to keep alive in the minds of the readers and the inhabitants of that society the attributes of that age and time.

The impact of Anderson and his Winesburg, Ohio upon younger American writers is such that there is an indelible mark upon most of the major American fiction of the twentieth century. In an interview in 1956, William Faulkner declared that Anderson was "the father of his generation of writers and the tradition of American writing which his successors

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[24]"Anderson's Winesburg," p. 90.

[25]Ibid., p. 91.

would carry on." Later, he remarked that Anderson had not been given his rightful place in American literature.[26] Ernest Hemingway, Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe and Jean Toomer are among the famous novelists who in various aspects of their work were influenced by Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio.

Hemingway was the first of the disciples to make the acquaintance of Sherwood Anderson. They met in Chicago in the early fall of 1920, shortly after Hemingway's return from Italy and following the disastrous physical and mental wounds inflicted upon him by World War I. In Anderson Hemingway found a means by which he could develop his own creative abilities as a writer. As an artist the much older man, Anderson, was appealing to the youthful writer whose sketches had appeared in only Sunday newspaper supplements.[27] Anderson showed Hemingway several important aspects of writing:

> He showed that it was possible to write as one really felt and still find a substantial following, that it was possible to take for material the lives of race-track swipes, adolescent boys, or degenerate old men,

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[26]Rex Burbank, Sherwood Anderson (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964), p. 144.

[27]William Phillips, "Two Prize Pupils of Sherwood Anderson," The Achievement of Sherwood Anderson: Essays in Criticism, Ray Lewis White, ed. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1966), p. 202.

> and write about them with lyric intensity, and that it was possible to create a style, stripped clear of 'literary' mannerisms, capable of evoking intense emotion from simple incidents.[28]

All of these possibilities were illustrated in Winesburg, Ohio, for there are no characters in the novel who do not express some feeling of Anderson, nor are there any who do not evoke some kind of emotions in the reader.

Furthermore, Hemingway's indebtedness to Anderson extends beyond the influence on his writing. It might be said that Anderson's letters of introduction to Gertrude Stein and others of the Paris literari in 1921, after Hemingway's departure from Chicago, not only introduced Hemingway, but also introduced his writing. Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound became his new mentors, and each attempted to develop in him the artistic discipline which Anderson had been unable or unwilling to undertake.[29] However, the strong attraction of Anderson's style and material continued to pervade Hemingway's works despite the support of his new mentors. Examples of Anderson's influence can be seen in Hemingway's second work, "Up in Michigan," which is concerned with the adolescent discovery of sex. This situation is one which is fundamental to the development of dozens of Anderson's

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[28]Ibid., p. 203.

[29]Ibid., p. 204.

stories, including several in Winesburg, Ohio. Moreover, Hemingway's use of the growth of young Nick Adams in In Our Time is similar to Anderson's use of George Willard in Winesburg, Ohio.[30] In addition, Hemingway was offered a contract in 1925 for the publication of In Our Time, with Horace Liveright, as a direct result of Anderson's intervention. The book was Hemingway's first fiction to be published in the United States. He was grateful for Anderson's help, and acknowledged that help by writing to him in May of 1925 giving him credit for, as he said, "having put my book over with Liveright."[31]

Nevertheless, the publication of Hemingway's The Torrents of Spring in 1926 marked the end of the Anderson-Hemingway relationship, because the novel-length satire was Hemingway's declaration of literary independence from Anderson.[32] In the novel Hemingway achieved a hilarious, as well as a cruel and merciless, parody of Anderson's themes and style, as found particularly in his Dark Laughter and Many Marriages.[33]

William Phillips maintained that:

Some criticisms of Anderson's work implied in the

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[30]Ibid., p. 205. [31]Ibid. [32]Ibid., p. 206.

[33]Ibid.

> book were justifiable; in the parodies of the crude symbolism in Dark Laughter and Many Marriages, of the sentimentality into which Anderson's earnest attempts to capture human moods often led him, of his willingness to allow his insights into his characters to remain unstated or clearly suggested, and of his preoccupations with vague sex longings poked fun at elements of Anderson's fiction which embarrassed his ardent admirers.[34]

Moreover, despite the fact that Hemingway wrote two conciliatory letters to Anderson in hopes of raising the attack of the novel to the level of impersonality, Anderson was both bewildered and hurt.[35] Although Anderson and Hemingway were never friends again, the indebtedness to Anderson continued to be evidenced in later Hemingway works and was never denied by Hemingway.

Another student follower of Sherwood Anderson was William Faulkner. Faulkner met Anderson in New Orleans two years before Hemingway's The Torrents of Spring was published. Faulkner had come down to the Crescent City (New Orleans) from his native Oxford, Mississippi, in order to associate with the writers who gathered around the Times-Picayune and The Double Dealer, a magazine which had published several of his poems. He and Anderson made their acquaintance through Anderson's wife, Elizabeth Prall Anderson, and each made a lasting impression upon the other.[36] Anderson created a

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[34]Ibid. [35]Ibid., pp. 207-208. [36]Ibid., p. 207.

replica of Faulkner in his short story, "A Meeting South," the story of a young war veteran, wounded and disillusioned, while Faulkner modeled the character of Al Jackson in his Mosquitoes on Sherwood Anderson.[37]

In one of their many conversations, Anderson advised Faulkner to write about what he knew:

> You're a country boy; all you know is that little patch up there in Mississippi where you started from. But that's all right, too.[38]

However, it was not until his third novel, Sartoris (1929), that Faulkner actually used this advice and wrote about his own family and life in Mississippi. Sartoris was the first of the Yoknapatawpha County novels, which were modeled on Winesburg, Ohio.[39]

In Winesburg, Ohio Anderson had created an Ohio community which was complete, in that it had everything from livery barns to characters with twisted lives—all interrelated to form the ideal of grotesqueness. These characters were grotesques because they had isolated themselves from the

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[37]Lewis Leary, William Faulkner of Yoknapatawpha County (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1973), p. 19.

[38]Cleanth Brooks, R. W. B. Lewis, and Robert Penn Warren, eds., American Literature: The Makers and the Making (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), Vol. II, p. 2563.

[39]Ibid.

love and peaceful order found in Winesburg. Moreover, the abnormalities which are the results of this isolation function in two ways: (1) they may place emphasis on a norm of value from which the grotesque has been cut; for example, in "Godliness," in which Jesse Bentley's sacrifice of his grandson is seen as a horrible misapplication of the Bible; and (2) they suggest qualities which the society itself is incapable of achieving—Wing Biddlebaum's desire to love is misinterpreted by the people of the Pennsylvania town, and no one in Winesburg except George Willard will take time to wonder why he is such a frightened little man.[40]

An elaboration of the Winesburg method can be found in Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha novels. If one were to extend the town of Winesburg in space and time, one would have Yoknapatawpha County. Moreover, with the development of Jesse Bentley and Wing Biddlebaum of Winesburg throughout a long novel, one would have Doc Hines and Gail Hightower of Light in August; with a further penetration into Belle Carpenter's soul, one has Temple Drake of Sanctuary or Caddie Compson of The Sound and the Fury; and with the extension of Anderson's Winesburg almost infinitely in depth, time and

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[40]Phillips, "Two Prize Pupils," p. 209.

space, one would have the entire body of Faulkner's novels.[41] Throughout the years which followed their first meeting Faulkner continued to admire Anderson and Winesburg, Ohio despite the series of minor quarrels which blemished the friendship of the two.[42]

Louis J. Budd, in his article "The Grotesques of Anderson and Wolfe," supplies a great deal of evidence to prove that Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio influenced Thomas Wolfe's Look Homeward, Angel. That Wolfe had read Winesburg, Ohio and was very much impressed with it seems significant to Budd's claim. Moreover, Wolfe's subtitle for his first book, "A Story of the Buried Life," echoes the theme of Winesburg, Ohio, as was seen in Anderson's dedication, which spoke of "The hunger to see beneath the surface of lives."[43] Budd notes that:

> The 'terror' that Wolfe savored in Anderson's fiction rose primarily from the vision they shared of man's loneliness. People in Winesburg and Altamont have lost their ancestral moorings and their sense of belonging.[44]

Both Anderson and Wolfe pitied especially the misshaping which happens when men are baffled in their desire for a

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[41]Ibid.

[42]Ibid., p. 210.

[43]Modern Fiction Studies (Spring 1959): 305.

[44]Ibid., p. 306.

sense of closeness to other men. While Winesburg has its Elizabeth Willard, Dr. Reefy, Louise Hardy and Wing Biddlebaum, Altamont has their counterpart in the person of W. O. Gant. Like any or all of them, Gant is never able to express his feelings for his family and fellow man, and because of this problem he is isolated from them.[45] Other Wolfe characters who mirror the Winesburg characters are Helen, the frustrated older daughter of Gant and his wife Eliza, and Ben Gant, who, like Dr. Parcival's brother who never revealed his love for Dr. Parcival or his mother, hides his love from Eugene.[46] Budd maintains that because of its searching, bewildered and deeply agitated characters, Look Homeward, Angel is a second "Book of the Grotesque."[47]

Moreover, by making the adolescent's attempt to discover life reveal the tension which exists between cruelty and understanding, Wolfe and Anderson are closely related. Both George Willard and Eugene Gant aspire to remedy the dilemma of feeling by becoming writers and both leave their towns in hopes of becoming conscious adults.[48]

Along with similarities in their attitudes toward the human condition, Anderson and Wolfe also used similar

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[45]Ibid. [46]Ibid. [47]Ibid., pp. 306-307.

[48]Ibid., p. 307.

techniques of writing. Both Anderson and Wolfe place more value on emotion and idea than on rigid structure; Winesburg, Ohio deliberately avoids symmetry and Look Homeward, Angel is somewhat shapeless. Both books approach the effects of sketches held in the loose autobiographical cycle that Anderson helped to establish during the twenties as a prose form.[49] In addition, the plot line of both works is close—in both a boy gropes toward understanding the emotions and frustrations of his townspeople, but, because of the death of a loved member of the family, becomes restless and takes the train to the city and to the initiation of his adulthood.[50]

Wolfe's admiration for Winesburg, Ohio was the element which held the two works so close to one another. According to Budd:

> He admired its descent into the emotional world, its counterpoint of terror and beauty, its poignant sense of man's isolation and the psychic deformities caused by his drive to communicate, its symbolic use of the adolescent's struggle toward identity, and its somber yet loving concern with American life.[51]

In essence, Winesburg, Ohio influenced almost every aspect of Look Homeward, Angel—its viewpoint and its structure. Finally, Budd notes:

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[49]Ibid. [50]Ibid., p. 308. [51]Ibid.

> Pointing out this influence is worthwhile only so far as it improves our reading of Wolfe's luxuriant masterpiece, which incontestably contains teeming proof of his own genius as of other borrowings. Awareness of the debt to Anderson better illuminates W. O. Gant, who could have lived in Winesburg as he 'strode muttering through the streets with rapid gestures of his enormous talking hands.' It better illuminates the 'fears and speechless pity' that Eliza felt when she saw her husband's 'small uneasy eyes grow still and darkened with the foiled and groping hunger of old frustration.' It underscores the point that a climactic utterance of Look Homeward is her final lament, 'We must try to love one another.'[52]

Thus, Anderson's contributions to Wolfe justify the tribute he paid to Anderson for seeing America both with a poet's vision and with a poetic vision of life, which was to his mind the way it had to be seen.[53]

In her article, "Sherwood Anderson and Jean Toomer: A Literary Relationship," Mary Jane Dickerson provides evidence that there is a link between the development of Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio and that of Jean Toomer's Cane, works which have had great impact on twentieth-century fiction. She contends that Anderson and Toomer knew each other's work and that both were parts of a particular literary group which included many mutual friends: Hart Crane, Alfred Steiglitz, Paul Rosenfeld and, especially, the novelist and critic Waldo Frank.[54] Moreover, Dickerson maintains

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[52]Ibid., p. 309. [53]Ibid., p. 310. [54]Ibid.

that:

> Certain similarities in structure and theme, such as the use of the unifying narrator-observer, character sketches functioning as structural devices, the focus on women to examine the inner life and the use of the larger framework of a disappearing rural and small-town American landscape, suggest that Winesburg influenced the shaping of Cane.[55]

The friendships which Anderson and Toomer had with Waldo Frank came at particularly critical times in their literary careers. Anderson and Frank discussed Winesburg, Ohio before its eventual publication in 1919, during the summer of 1916, while in 1922 Frank travelled to Georgia with Toomer. This experience instantaneously motivated the composition of Cane.[56] The period of time Frank spent with each writer may be coincidental to the parallels between the structural and thematic forms of Winesburg, Ohio and Cane, but the parallels do suggest some kind of influence on each of the works.[57]

Their lack of any conventional plot structure provides one distinctive parallel between Winesburg and Cane. The structural looseness of both works emphasizes the unified emotional impact on the reader, as he realizes that, even as the characters search for meaning in their lives, the writers

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[55] Studies in American Fiction 1 (Spring 1973): 163.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

are penetrating their cultural backgrounds for the sources of their art.[58]

Other points proving the parallelism between the two works are (1) in Cane the Dixie Pike functions symbolically very much as does Trunion Pike in Winesburg, because it suggests a connection between characters who appear in the work and (2) the individual portraits in Cane function as do those in Winesburg, because in both the portrayals compel the reader to view people in a particular environment and to realize the meanings of life represented in those people.[59]

Also, both writers focus on women as the preservers of life. Toomer portrays his black women in the first third of Cane through the eyes of his poet-observer, who is an outsider trying to find the true meaning of life. Like George Willard, he turns to women to find the answer to the question of why people are often frustrated and alone.[60] Because Anderson's depictions are of women who are struggling for love and understanding in a community which fails to provide them, Toomer's women are similar to Anderson's women in Winesburg.

Just as it does in Cane, in Winesburg the city causes people to be estranged. For example, Dorris and John in

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[58]Ibid., p. 164. [59]Ibid. [60]Ibid.

Cane are kept apart because of their different perspectives on life in the city, while Alice Hindman and her lover Ned, in Winesburg, are separated when he goes to the city.[61]

In addition, Anderson's George Willard and Toomer's Ralph Kabnis are very much alike. Kabnis, like Willard, must find himself through an understanding of his past as well as through a recognition of his direction in the future. Both are also writers.[62]

Toomer's use of the cane fields, the cornfields and the cotton fields is reminiscent of Anderson's use of corn fields, apple orchards and berry fields in Winesburg. In both works the characters go to the fields and orchards hoping to solve their problems. Dickerson believes that the strongest people in Winesburg, Ohio and in Cane are those who have the more direct experience with their native soil. She explains:

> George Willard's sexual encounter with Louise Trunnion is marked by the corn fields around them. Matters of fertility, birth, and death take place in 'Karintha' on a bed of pine needles; Carma runs to the cane field to exorcize her fury and frustration with her husband; the poet-narrator takes Fern through a cane field to a branch when he takes her out to taste himself of the life—force that draws men to her in reverence and awe; in 'Blood—Burning Moon,' the working out of the tragic antipathy between the black man and the white man takes

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[61]Ibid., p. 165.

[62]Ibid.

> place in the midst of the boiling down of the cane and the air is permeated with the aching sweetness of the syrup; George Willard's conversation with Wing Biddlebaum takes place on a grassy bank away from the implicating stares of the townspeople and the little man is able to express something of his love and need for his fellow man that is misunderstood by so many.... George Willard goes outward for a walk on Trunion Pike to get a renewed sense of the landscape; the final scene in Cane is permeated with a relationship between Carrie and the rebirth of the sunrise.[63]

In other words, Nature is important to the existence of the characters because through it many of them are able to experience and come to understand life. Thus, Anderson and Toomer bring to life the source of American heritage and disclose the desire of both white and black people to understand the significance and the beauty of life found in Nature.

Sherwood Anderson's great influence upon several major figures in twentieth-century American writing is evident. Not only are the writers discussed in this chapter, Hemingway, Faulkner, Wolfe and Toomer, his "apostles," but others influenced include Hart Crane, John Steinbeck and William Saroyan.[64] For them Anderson formulated a kind of fiction which was different from the conventional models both

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[63]Ibid., p. 172.

[64]Burbank, Sherwood Anderson, p. 141.

in subject matter and in narrative technique and style. Moreover, because Winesburg, Ohio and several of his other works are established as classics, Sherwood Anderson has a secure position as an important figure in American literature.[65]

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[65]Ibid.

CONCLUSION

Although Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio does not follow the rudiments of the conventional novel, it is a novel which is unique because of its structural innovations. Not only is the work a collection of stories which are interrelated, but it is the story of the maturation of a young boy, George Willard, into the complex world of the adult. Moreover, Anderson's technique for connecting these stories includes using Willard as a counterpoint to the grotesques he depicts. These grotesques, who are, for example, Wing Biddlebaum in "Hands," Dr. Reefy in "Paper Pills," Elizabeth Willard in "Mother" and Alice Hindman in "Adventure," come to George Willard to tell him their stories of suffering in hopes of redeeming themselves in him. Furthermore, the revelation of the sufferings of the grotesques provides the necessary stimulation for George Willard to realize the significance of life and to become aware of the essential isolation of man. Owing to his adventures in Winesburg, such as his first sexual encounter with Louise Trunnion in "Nobody Knows," his talk with Wash Williams in "Respectability,"

his first confrontation with the death of a loved one in "Death" and his confusing experience with Elmer Cowley in "Queer," George Willard approaches manhood with the intention of not becoming as those grotesques are. His leaving Winesburg after the death of his mother symbolizes his growth, because once he is away from the town there is no chance that his imaginative capacity will be stifled.

In addition to Anderson's use of recurring characters and the general setting of Winesburg, Winesburg, Ohio is a unified work because of his use of certain symbols which appear or are represented in his stories. Examples of the symbols are the single room and the twisted apples. The room is used in the context of the novel to imply the isolation and confinement which are exemplified in the characters of Dr. Reefy in "Paper Pills," who is alone in his office, Kate Swift, in "The Teacher," who is in her bedroom, the Reverend Curtis Hartman, in "Godliness," who is in his church tower and, more noticeably, in the character of Enoch Robinson, in "Loneliness," who creates his own world in his New York room. On the other hand, the symbol of the twisted apples is used not only to describe Dr. Reefy's hands or his courtship and marriage, but also to represent all of the grotesques of Winesburg, for in their deformities they too

are the sweetest products of life.

Among those grotesques who have a profound effect on George Willard and his final conception of life are Wing Biddlebaum, Enoch Robinson, Elizabeth Willard and Elmer Cowley. Others who do not affect him directly, but who, because of their particular problems, serve as metaphors from which he can observe and judge life, are Dr. Reefy and Alice Hindman.

Representing the misunderstood individual in society, Wing Biddlebaum is a frightened little man who has been victimized because he has tried to blend his concept of learning with affection. His hands, which are instrumental in his attempts to convey affection, are also the source of his condemnation by the people of the Pennsylvania town, who believe him to be a homosexual. Moreover, his hands are the reason that he isolates himself from others in Winesburg. However, Wing Biddlebaum finds a friend in George Willard, and he admonishes George not to become influenced by the people of Winesburg. In essence, he asserts that no man should be afraid to be an individual, nor should he be afraid to dream.

In the character of Dr. Reefy one recognizes the existence of two important components of how one perceives

life. They are appearance and reality. Because of his physical ugliness, Dr. Reefy appears to represent the distortions of life. However, beyond his physical appearance can be found the beautiful elements of his life. This beauty is reflected in his compassion and love for his wife and in his understanding of Elizabeth Willard and her need to be loved.

Hoping that his capacity for an imaginative life will not be destroyed, Elizabeth Willard envisions in George the fulfillment of a dream she has not been able to see come true in her own life. Unable to show her love for her son, she rejoices in her heart when she learns that he plans to leave Winesburg and the conventionality of her husband, Tom Willard. Moreover, her death discloses to George Willard the finality of death and causes him to want to live his own life more productively. It is at this point in his life that he decides to leave Winesburg and to resume his career as a writer.

The unsated Alice Hindman represents the true meaning of "grotesque" as defined by Anderson in his "Book of the Grotesque." She has taken as her truth the concept of romantic love which was derived from a brief affair with her lover, Ned Currie. Because she fantasizes for eleven years about the return of Ned and does not face reality, Alice's situation

is disastrous. However, finally, after her "Adventure," when one rainy night she runs naked into the streets of Winesburg, she comes to the realization that some people are destined to live alone. This realization releases her from her fantasies of Ned Currie. In Alice Hindman one recognizes the importance of facing reality and the need to be honest with oneself, for if she had done so Alice probably would have lived a happier life.

The loneliness of Enoch Robinson, in "Loneliness," conveys the idea of isolation which permeates Winesburg, Ohio. When Enoch tells his story of his fantasy-crowded room and his destiny to remain alone, George Willard feels something he has never felt for anyone, sympathy. Moreover, he realizes that the loneliness which Enoch feels is as much a part of his own life as of Enoch's.

Because he believes his family to be queer and because he is unable to communicate effectively, Elmer Cowley resents all that George Willard represents in Winesburg. Unlike Cowley, George is able to communicate easily and has a place in the society. These qualities are the ones that Cowley pursues, as he leaves Winesburg after he is unable to confide in George Willard his intention of not being branded "queer."

Despite the fact that it was labelled immoral and was banned from many libraries, the appearance of Winesburg, Ohio in 1919 signaled the beginning of a new form of fiction. Not only did Sherwood Anderson create a new structure for fiction, but his subject for the narrative was innovative. In addition, not all critics of the work believed it unworthy of praise, for H. L. Mencken called it "something new under the sun" and Maxwell Geismar maintained that it was a nostalgic document. Consequently, there is no valid reason to believe that Winesburg, Ohio did not have an impact on later novelists. Among these who found models in Winesburg, Ohio for some of their works are Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe and Jean Toomer. Each used the work, consciously or unconsciously, to create his own little Winesburg, Ohio.

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